



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA NAMES BERGER AS DIRECTOR OF ITS CENTER FOR PLANT HEALTH SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

WASHINGTON, May 30, 2008--Dr. Philip H. Berger of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has been named director of the agency's Center for Plant Health Science and Technology (CPHST).

Berger has been serving as the center's acting director since October 2007. CPHST, headquartered in Raleigh, N.C., provides scientific support for APHIS' plant protection and quarantine (PPQ) programs through work done at seven laboratories and two supporting units throughout the United States and Guatemala. The center works to identify and evaluate pathways used by invasive plant pests and weeds that threaten American agriculture and natural resources. It assesses the risks that these organisms pose to food, fiber and the environment. CPHST also helps to ensure that the methods, protocols and equipment used by PPQ and field personnel are the best available and contribute to the most effective and efficient program operations.

Berger has served in the PPQ program since 2003, when he became PPQ's national science program leader for molecular diagnostics and biotechnology. Berger also served as the acting associate director for the CPHST.

"Berger's capacity for innovative research and his management experience make him an ideal candidate for this position," said Rebecca Bech, deputy administrator of APHIS' PPQ program. "His leadership and knowledge will be of great benefit to the center."

Prior to joining APHIS, Berger served as a professor of plant pathology at the University of Idaho and the associate director of the Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station. He has authored more than 70 research papers, books and book chapters. Berger received the Phi Kappa Phi Distinguished Faculty Award from the University of Idaho and the Distinguished Alumnus Award from the University of Minnesota for his research on virus-resistant plants.

Berger received his bachelor's degree in psychology and physiology from the University of Minnesota in 1977. He later earned a master's degree in plant pathology from the University of Minnesota and a Ph.D. in plant pathology from Texas A&M University.

APHIS, an agency within USDA, works closely with all states to protect the health and value of American agriculture and natural resources. APHIS has a broad mission area that includes improving agricultural productivity and competitiveness, regulating genetically engineered organisms, conducting wildlife management activities, administering the Animal Welfare Act and managing outbreaks of plant pests and diseases.

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